

New York City: Something Old, Something New

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

There are some cities in the world that are on most people's lists to visit at some point in their lives -- London, Paris, and New York are just a few that spring to mind. But let's be honest, one visit is never going to be enough to see everything that these sprawling metropolises have to offer. It's a bit like going to Walt Disney World -- there'll always be more to see and that's why going back to New York was an obvious choice.

It was my fourth visit in the last 20 years and my first since our honeymoon trip of 1999. That's a long time to be away from any city and, as you'd expect, New York had changed a lot during that time. I suspect much of that is due to the world changing and tragic events of September 11, 2001 and it's something none of us should ever forget. Bearing that in mind, I knew one of the places we had to visit was Ground Zero.

Standing there, watching everyone bustle through the nearby subway station, it was hard to picture in my mind the Twin Towers that we had visited nine years ago for the superb views it had offered of the city. I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness and I just wished that we had been able to spend more time in New York so that we could've visited the [Ground Zero Museum Workshop](#) but with the little time we had, it wasn't an option on this trip. It's somewhere that is certainly worth seeing and gave us an opportunity to remember all those who lost their lives on that terrible day.

Of course, the events of that day understandably changed a lot of other things in New York and one of those was the Statue of Liberty. No longer can you climb to the top, so knowing that, we chose to stay on the ferry that takes you out there and instead opted to visit Ellis Island. I didn't realize, until a friend told me just before our visit, that this had undergone a renovation in recent years and that perhaps explains why I didn't remember much of it from my last visit there more than a decade earlier.

This is perhaps one of the best places to start any visit to New York, as it really puts the city's development in a good context, taking you through the frantic years from 1892 to 1954, when more than 12 million immigrants entered the country that they hoped would become their home. Audio guides take you back in time and really bring the island's history to life through the use of people's first hand experiences. Facts that stuck with me were the doctors only having an average of six

seconds to check each immigrant's health and some of the tests to check their intelligence levels were fascinating -- and also frightening -- to see! I'm not sure I could have passed some of those, particularly when you think of the weight on their shoulders, knowing that incorrect answers could dash their hopes of a new life. It's a truly fascinating place and one that's well worth seeing.

Something else that struck us that had changed over the years was the whole feel of the city. It felt much more welcoming now than perhaps it had previously. We were amused to see a man and a woman both hailing a cab and the man offering it to the woman -- not a sight that I'd certainly ever witnessed on any of my previous visits to the city. The last time we were here, New York City was a lot safer than it had been in the bad old days gone by, but even so, you were still wary traveling on the subway. That was something that also seems to have changed. I felt as safe down there as I have on any other underground train system in the world, which was a pleasant surprise to me. Some things hadn't changed of course. Times Square was still just as frenetic as the last time we were there, with the massive billboards all around, advertising everything under the sun and the news tickers telling you all the latest updates from around the world. Macy's still remains the place to go and shop anywhere in the world. That place never ceases to amaze me every time I visit it. Yes, I know it's the world's largest store, but somehow I just don't believe it -- until I get inside and then the scale of it is overwhelming!

Something else that was overwhelming was the view from the Top of the Rock, the brilliantly named observation deck at the Rockefeller Center. Having already visited the Empire State Building and, knowing that we were short on time, we opted this time for a different aerial view of New York City, not sure whether it would be as good. If anything, it was better. One obvious thing you can see from up there is the Empire State Building itself, but you also get some superb views of Central Park, the green oasis in the middle of prime city real estate. It's really only from up there that you can appreciate just how much land this takes up and why it's so close to New Yorkers' hearts.

It's a shame we didn't have more time to spend in New York this trip, but I have no doubt we will be back. It is, after all, one of the world's greatest cities to visit and it's somewhere that you can always return to and see new sights and wonders.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo

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